



**May 3, 2018**

### **Fethullah Gulen's Statement on World Press Freedom Day**

Today, the international community commemorates World Press Freedom Day, which provides us an opportunity to reflect on the value of a free press in society and to remind the public about violations of press freedom. On this occasion, I join with the United Nations and others around the world in celebrating the free press and in advocating for the release of journalists from prisons.

A free press is a fundamental component of a free and informed society. It fosters transparency, accountability and rule of law, which are all critical to democratic society. The press works like nerve endings that tell the government and people that something is wrong with the body. When these nerve endings are severed, problems can turn more serious. A wound can turn into gangrene. When people don't hear the suffering of their fellow citizens or are misinformed, they become indifferent and may justify oppression.

It is unfortunate that it is no longer possible to speak of a free press in my homeland Turkey. Turkish media is now under the direct or indirect control of the Turkish government. Independent media outlets and journalists in Turkey have been silenced, co-opted, sacked, jailed, or have been subject to even worse treatment. The Turkish government and leaders are afraid of a free press, and therefore have gone to great lengths to stop the press from investigating their misdeeds and crimes. The pressure on media owners translates to self-censorship. It is not possible to see any critical coverage of the Erdogan regime among the top selling newspapers or most watched TV channels.

What is happening in Turkey today is unthinkable for a country that until recently had a commitment to democratic institutions. Turkey has become the leading jailer of journalists in the world. Even worse, enmity and dehumanization against Hizmet participants and others such as Alevis and Kurds is made possible through the control of the media. The toxic effects of these campaigns will last for at least a generation.

I urge the international community to continue and deepen its pressure on Turkey's leaders to restore fundamental human rights and freedoms. I also urge it to call on the government to bring an end to its state of emergency, which further facilitates their persecution of critical journalists and reporters. The journalists and other innocent people who were unjustly jailed must be freed. I pray to God to provide a safe environment for Turkish citizens and journalists to speak out or publish without fear of reprisal.

**About Fethullah Gülen**

Fethullah Gülen is an Islamic scholar, preacher and social advocate, whose decades-long commitment to education, interfaith dialogue and altruism has inspired millions in Turkey and around the world. Gülen is the honorary chairman of the Rumi Forum, Washington, DC and the Intercultural Dialogue Platform, Brussels, Belgium.

### **About Alliance for Shared Values**

The Alliance for Shared Values (AFSV) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that serves as a voice for cultural organizations affiliated with Hizmet, a civil society movement inspired by prominent preacher and peace advocate Fethullah Gülen. The Alliance strives to promote peace and social harmony by helping reduce misinformation and false stereotypes about any or all ethnic, cultural and religious communities. To learn more about the Alliance, please visit [www.afsv.org](http://www.afsv.org).

### **Media contact**

[media@afsv.org](mailto:media@afsv.org)

212-682-4278